

EXCERPTS FROM PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S NEWS CONFERENCE ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH, 1965 (copied from the February 5th edition of the New York Times)

4. VIETNAM DEVELOPMENTS

Q. Can you tell us why -- since your last news conference there has been a considerable number of developments in Vietnam; Mr. Bundy is currently there. I wonder if you could speak generally to us about Vietnam and your attitude toward these late developments.

A. Yes. There has been no change in the position of this country in regard to our desire or our determination to help the people of Vietnam preserve their freedom.

I frequently observe to the people of this country that our basic commitment to Vietnam was made in a statement 10 years ago by our President to the general effect that we would help the people of Vietnam help themselves. . . .

I only want to reassert this morning our determination to continue our present policy -- the policy of our Government from the beginning -- to try to help the people of Vietnam help themselves to preserve their freedom.

Q. Mr. President.

A. Mr. Morgan.

Q. Mr. President, as I understand it, we are in South Vietnam at the invitation and request of the South Vietnamese Government. Yesterday there was a dispatch from Paris saying that North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese officials were exploring behind the scenes the possibility of a negotiated settlement. What happens if we are invited to leave South Vietnam by the South Vietnamese Government?

A. I would not anticipate that we would receive such an invitation. I would comment only on the dispatch that came from unknown and unauthorized and, I rather think, uninformed sources in Paris that, in my judgment, that dispatch had no validity and like a good many, was completely untrue.

I believe that we will continue, as I said before, to do our very best to make our effort in Vietnam more efficient and more effective in helping the people of Vietnam to help themselves.

I would not want to speculate on what might be, if this situation happened, or that situation happened. I would want to cross that bridge when I came to it. But I do not anticipate crossing any such bridge as was indicated by the dispatch from Paris.

Q. Does that mean, sir, that you are opposed to the suggestions of the Senators of your own party, notably Mr. Gore and Mr. Church, recommending the exploration of a negotiated settlement?

A. That means -- my position, I think, is abundantly clear: That we are there to be as effective and efficient as we can in helping the people of South Vietnam resist aggression and preserve their freedom.

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8. VIETNAM COMMITMENT

Q. Mr. President, to go back to the Vietnam situation, do you consider that the American national interest is limited only to fulfilling the commitment that you spoke of?

A. No, I didn't intend to preclude -- I did not intend to narrow our interest in the matter. I intended to make abundantly clear that we had made a commitment to help these people help themselves and we intended to abide by it.

Q. Do you consider as some people do that there is a larger national interest in the sense that the war in Vietnam is part of an effort to contain Chinese expansionism in Asia?

A. I think that the effort in Vietnam is an effort to help liberty-loving people preserve their freedom and realizing how much we appreciated those who helped us to obtain ours that we want to help everyone we can preserve theirs.

And our purpose there is to help the people of South Vietnam preserve their freedom and we're doing all we can to do that.

Q. Mr. President.

A. Right.

Q. Does this constitute recognition of the present Government of South Vietnam or are those some of the matters that are still being looked at?

A. I -- I do not think that there's any -- that is a question that we're dealing with at the moment. We're working with the existing government as we have been right along.